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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes discussions from two round-table seminars exploring federal programs that affect children and families. Ideas presented in this report are organized around five topics: (1) symptoms of fragmented federal programs for children and families; (2) why coordinated services for children and families are so rare; (3) what Congress could do to make federal programs more effective and efficient; (4) legislative provisions to promote coordinated services; and (5) what the Clinton Administration can do to make federal programs for children and families more coherent. Appendices include a list of seminar participants, who represented a cross section of key Congressional staff responsible for a wide range of programs, including Aid to Families with Dependent children, the Earned Income Tax Credit, Chapter 1, Food Stamps, Head Start, Medicaid, and housing assistance for the poor. Also appended are brief descriptions of 10 major federal programs affecting children and families, and a few facts about children and families in the United States. (MM)

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# SOLVING THE MAZE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES.

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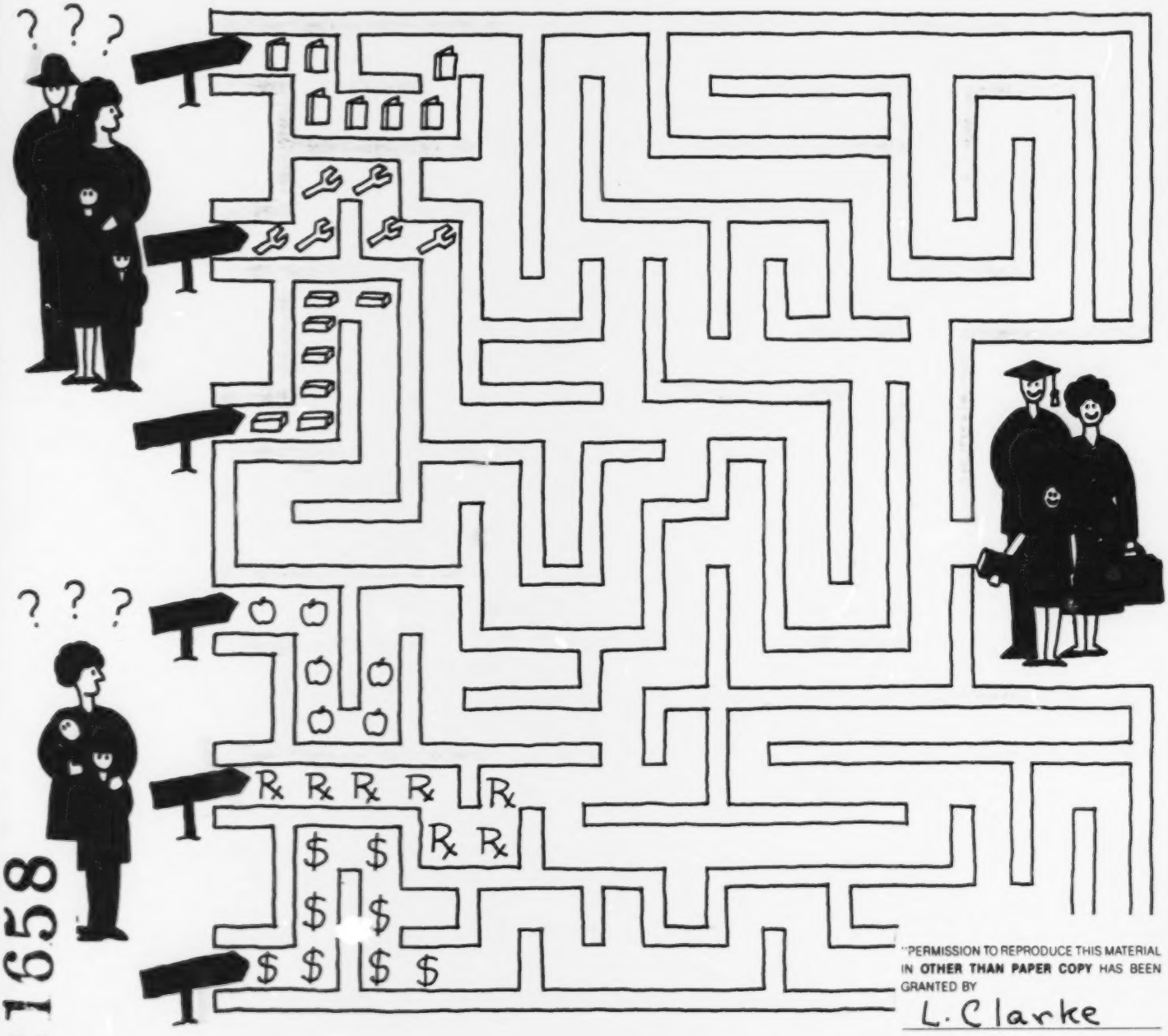
## *PERSPECTIVES FROM KEY CONGRESSIONAL STAFF*

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# SOLVING THE MAZE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

## *PERSPECTIVES FROM KEY CONGRESSIONAL STAFF*

*Special Report #1*

*The Policy Exchange*
The Institute for Educational Leadership

1993

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Additional copies of *Solving the Maze of Federal Programs for Children & Families: Perspectives from Key Congressional Staff* are available for $10 pre-paid, from the Institute for Educational Leadership, Suite 310, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 822-8405. Volume discounts are available.

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# INTRODUCTION

Children and families are multi-faceted, with educational, health, income-support, nutritional, social services, housing, employment, recreational and other needs. Every family—rich or poor, large or small—knows that these needs are inter-related. But most federal and state programs are organized to fit within the jurisdictions of specific Congressional committees and Executive Branch departments, not the more complex realities that face today's families.

Too often, the Rube Goldberg result is inefficiency and poor services for families, communities and states.

**To explore the maze of federal programs affecting children and families, the Institute for Educational Leadership's Policy Exchange held two round-table seminars in December of 1992.** Participants were an eclectic, bipartisan and savvy cross section of key Congressional staff responsible for a wide range of programs, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Chapter 1, Food Stamps, Head Start, Medicaid and housing assistance for the poor. (For a list of participants, see Appendix A. For short descriptions of these programs, see Appendix B.)

The families that these programs serve have changed dramatically in the past decade. As a population we are getting older. One in every five children is poor. Only three percent of U.S. households fit the Ozzie and Harriet model with one parent in the work force and one at home. More than two-thirds of children under age 18 have working mothers. And per capita federal spending for the elderly is ten times greater than per capita spending for children. (See Appendix C, "A Few Facts About Children and Families.")

Seminar discussions were candid and constructive. They touched on the frustrations of fragmentation and identified strategies for improving coordination among committees and across agencies. Possible solutions ranged from tinkering around the programmatic edges to, in the words of one seminar participant, suggestions that "make Ross Perot look like a moderate."

The following pages summarize insights and strategies raised by key Congressional staff—not your average Joe but, rather, people in positions to influence national policies affecting children and families.

***While this report is written in a conversational tone and often uses the first person ("I," We") to convey the energy and openness of the discussion, the specific items are not quotations: they are composites and summaries of the varied points of view expressed.***

This report does not present a single blueprint for action. Rather, it shares the flood of sometimes contradictory, and always challenging, ideas that characterized the seminars. These ideas are organized around five topics:

Symptoms of fragmented federal programs for children and families,

Why coordinated services for children and families are so rare,

What Congress could do to make federal programs more effective and efficient,

Legislative provisions to promote coordinated services, and

What the Clinton Administration can do to make federal programs for children and families more coherent.

The reauthorization schedule, Congressional priorities, Congressional reorganization and the Clinton Administration's policy agenda will provide many opportunities in the coming months and years to make the maze of federal programs affecting children and families more—or, hopefully, less—confusing.

IEL's Policy Exchange looks forward to contributing to this discussion. Future Policy Exchange activities to stimulate discussion and improve policies affecting children and families will include seminars such as those described in this publication, site visits, state activities and publications.

*It doesn't take a medical degree or a law degree*
*to diagnose the critical condition*
*of federal programs for children and families.*
*The symptoms are numerous and painful.*

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF FRAGMENTED FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

### There are too many different programs run by too many different agencies.

There are 125 different federal job training programs. There are nine different federal programs to prevent teen pregnancy, all targeting the same population and using the same methods.

The federal funding structure creates a monster all the way down to states and localities. For example, a community or state could have three different federal drug programs for young people—one through the Department of Education, one through the Department of Justice and one through the Department of Health and Human Services. But, they don't know about each other, much less coordinate what they're doing or who they're doing it to.

Running a coordinated program in a community might mean reporting to nine different state commissioners who can't agree on anything, even whether the program should buy a new photocopier. The local officials don't trust the state officials. And the state officials don't trust the local officials.

Creating a program has all the benefits. Everyone wants their own program with their name on it.

If one program doesn't work, we just create another one. But we never abolish the first program that didn't work.

Some programs are anachronistic or duplicative. Yet, they continue year after year.

Killing a program is the hardest thing to do because of jurisdictional issues, administrative reasons and support from constituency groups.

The biggest policy barrier to making sense out of programs for children and families is too many narrow categorical programs and the mind set that perpetuates them.

**Programs don't fit together to meet the needs of real people.**

Take, for example, the case of one father who lost his job after an accident. Because the family couldn't afford health insurance, medical bills piled up and the family fell behind on its rent. The family was about to be evicted and the children put into foster care (at $25,000 per child per year) when, in fact, all the family needed was help paying two months rent. But there was no pot of money for rent.

The eligibility rules for all of the different programs don't fit together. Each program operates as if it were the only one. To get benefits, people have to go to different agencies to register and show different documentation to prove their eligibility.

Providing rental housing assistance doesn't do much good if there is no housing to rent. Just looking at the overall housing vacancy rate is misleading. For example, Dallas has a 20-30 percent vacancy rate for middle-income housing. But there is almost no housing for lower-income people.

**Federal programs treat states like children. The federal government micro-manages and doesn't allow for flexibility.**

We treat states like I treat my four and a half year old. We give a very narrow range of choices: do you want to wear your red shirt or your blue shirt? What we should do is treat states like fourteen year olds. We should give states more latitude, assume they're going to screw up from time to time and, when they do, help them do better the next time (rather than pouncing on them the minute they make a mistake).

At the federal level, we fail to give states enough flexibility to coordinate social programs. States aren't able to blend funding streams.

We distrust the states, sometimes for good reason. Historically, some states have put money where it was *least* needed, rather than most needed. I've seen that from personal experience. People are afraid that states will abuse flexibility, just like they have in the past.

We have to find ways to get people in states to work together, to develop trust, so that federal money helps those most in need, but states and communities aren't hamstrung by micro-management.

We micro-manage at the federal level. For example, we ask Chapter 1 teachers to keep too many records—and sometimes to keep track of the wrong things.

**The federal bureaucracy is in gridlock.**

The federal bureaucracy is characterized by a lack of passion to deliver services to the hungry youngster. And, without that, you get turf protection, not good programs and not good coordination.

When we wanted to get a copy of a unified application for AFDC (administered by the Department of Health and Human Services) and Food Stamps (administered by the Department of Agriculture), we first called HHS for a copy and were told to call Agriculture. Then we called Agriculture for a copy and were told to call HHS. We still don't have a copy of the unified application form. If it's that hard for a Congressional staff member to get a straight answer, imagine what it is like for someone out in a state!

It has taken far too long for the departments to issue important regulations. For example, the Family Support Act was passed in 1988, but HHS did not issue regulations for the child care provisions until 1992. And the regulations for the 1986 Higher Education Act legislation didn't come out until 1992.

A recent study showed that 60 percent of the denials for AFDC were for procedural reasons, not because the family wasn't poor enough to qualify for help. The whole federal reward system, from intake to audits, is set up to keep people *out*—then we wonder why people who really need the services don't get *in*.

**Programs reward the wrong behaviors—of both recipients and administrators.**

There's no accountability. Who gets fired when a program doesn't work? The President? A committee? No, nothing happens.

Federal audit procedures only look for fraud and *over-enrollment* in programs. Our audit system doesn't help when the problem is that people who need services aren't getting them. Sure, we need good accountability systems. But audits should identify problems of *under-enrollment*, too.

It's far easier for the people running programs to go by the books and assume that someone is trying to abuse the system, rather than be flexible enough to respond to individual problems.

There has been a "penalty mentality" in all of these programs. If people get income, they get penalized.

Our needs-tested programs (Medicaid, AFDC, the Earned Income Tax Credit, Food Stamps, etc.) phase out as people earn more money. That makes sense, but it can be like falling off a cliff. If someone makes just a little bit over the cutoff line, they may end up being worse off. It is a perverse incentive.

Federal student aid can't be counted as income for determining AFDC payments. But, if someone goes out and earns the same amount of money, their AFDC payment is reduced. That doesn't make sense and it rewards the wrong kind of behavior.

We treat poor people with a lack of respect.

**We don't speak the same language, even though our programs serve the same people.**

We don't understand each other's jargon or frame of reference. Working out common goals and solutions is awfully hard when we can't understand each other.

JTPA...Carl Perkins Act...OBRA...excess morbidity...Thrifty Food Plan...Chapter 1...Title XX...IDEA...Part H...Tech Prep...Title IV-E....

**You have to be a great manager to be poor.**

The "haves"—people who know how to work the system—benefit the most from an uncoordinated and complicated array of health, educational, social and other services. The people who most need services may not have the resources to figure out how to get them.

*The barriers to coordinated services for children and families are substantial. A key problem is turf.*

## WHY ARE COORDINATED SERVICES * FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SO RARE?

**We see the trees, not the forest.**
**There isn't a clear federal vision that unifies all of these programs, even though they serve largely the same people.**

Many programs—even when they do essentially the same things for essentially the same people—have different and conflicting goals. For example, the administrator of a job training program for young fathers spoke against child support enforcement, saying it was disrespectful to the men.

We need more flexibility, but also more efficiency, in the use of federal funds. Protecting the poorest is the idea behind categorical programs. What we need to do is agree on goals with the states, then give them flexibility in terms of exactly who will be served and what will be provided.

We all identify different problems, so it's no wonder we come up with different solutions. Economists and educators, for example, disagree about what the problem is.

There is a crisis-oriented approach to policy making. We enact legislation in response to a specific problem, rather than taking a long-term perspective.

The House select committees (on children, aging and hunger) look across committees to see the big picture. But they don't have any clout. (These select committees went out of existence in April 1993.) The committees that have authorizing power—clout—have

* Seminar participants used the term "coordinated services" broadly—to include integrating or blending services and programs as well as cooperation among separate programs.

no incentives to see beyond their jurisdiction to grasp the big picture. That makes it very hard to set priorities.

**People at the federal level don't understand the problems and issues facing states, communities and families.**

We need to listen to the bottom of the food chain. We need to get concrete examples of problems and federal barriers to coordination from people in the states and at the local level.

No one in the federal government has had a new good idea on child welfare in the last ten years. Innovation is coming from the states. They have had to find ways around the system that we created at the federal level.

The federal response to seeing a good program is to come back and legislate a new program just like the one we saw. And that's where the problem is.

You can write nice language at the federal level, but they slice things up differently at the state and local levels. Services like child welfare are organized differently in each state, so it's hard to have a one-size-fits-all federal recipe for coordination.

**Turf—State and local programs compete for funds and visibility.**

Competition among programs and jealousy between the people running them are often barriers to coordinating services that could make people self-sufficient. For example, a successful job training program that got welfare-dependent women into jobs was criticized by a colleague in Head Start because "that program is taking my people away."

People fear that they will lose their position, their staff, their title and their empire if they collaborate, integrate services and strengthen other programs.

**Turf—The Congressional committee structure makes fashioning comprehensive programs difficult.**

Programs affecting children and families are spread across a variety of committees that don't normally work together.

The Congressional committee structure makes it almost impossible to devise collaborative, coordinated strategies. We'll take out an important provision, rather than have a bill referred to another committee, too. That's the kiss of death.

There is no mechanism for us to talk to each other across committees—to get Finance and Labor and Human Resources and Agriculture and Housing to sit down and talk about these issues.

Appropriations is the only place where we see real program oversight. The other committees don't have any teeth.

It's difficult to make an early phone call to resolve a problem if we think there will be a turf battle.

There's a lot of smarts on the hill and a lot of good will on both sides, but we don't talk to each other very much.

**Turf—Special interest groups fight to preserve "their" programs.**

All of the different national lobbying organizations compete with one another for funding for *their* programs and *their* issues. It is hard for Congress to look holistically at children and families when most of the pressure comes from special interest groups that look at issues narrowly.

The lobbyists are too powerful for us to restructure federal programs the way we should.

Each program, be it large or small, has at least two constituencies. The obvious constituency is the people who get benefits. But often the most powerful and vocal constituency is the groups and institutions affected: schools, agricultural producers, groups of employees and so forth.

I sat through days of testimony on student financial aid. The real battles were about which states and which types of institutions would benefit the most, not about students.

**Members of Congress get credit for specific bills—not for looking at the big picture.**

The initial legislative response to a good program is to draft a bill to clone it. That's a problem. There aren't cookie-cutter solutions for coordinating programs for children and families. Different approaches work in different states and communities. We have to allow for that.

Nobody likes to fund block grants that cut across issues. We like to fund programs like WIC (the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children), School Lunch and Head Start, where there is an identifiable program that we can get our hands around.

Hmmm.... Maybe there should be a rule that programs can't be named after a member until he or she is dead—or at least out of Congress.

**The more we target the most needy,
the more complicated programs become.**

We waste a lot of money figuring out eligibility for the same family again and again. Each program has its own set of rules. If we want to target services to the most needy, why can't we come up with a way to determine income or "need" across programs, even if different programs have different cutoff points?

There is a tension between the desire to target programs to the most needy and the desire to integrate programs so that all families can get services.

I'm not opposed to giving people money, but I worry that people will use it to buy drugs or misuse it, rather than spend it on food, shelter, housing and other worthwhile things. Vouchers are a way to make sure that people don't misuse federal money.

Housing vouchers are very inefficient. And they don't contribute to building good housing stock.

JTPA (the Job Training Partnership Act) is terribly inefficient, too. You have waste on duplication of services, multiple charges for overhead, etc. Only forty to fifty cents on the dollar actually goes to training. The rest pays for administration. That's a lot of jobs, but not for the people the program is supposed to help.

**Fragmentation can sneak up on you.
Once a program is labeled "successful,"
Congress asks it to do more and more—
gradually loading it down until it isn't so successful.**

Successful programs—those with a good cost-benefit analysis—are often asked to deal with other problems—alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, you name it—that they were never designed to address. This hasn't happened yet with WIC (the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children) and Head Start. But it could.

If you ask a program to do more, you have ask whether that change would support or damage the original goal of the program.

Look, for example, at what has happened with the Earned Income Tax Credit. Now a family may have to do three separate calculations for this credit—one for the basic credit, a second one if they bought health insurance and a third one if a baby was born during the tax year. This simple credit is getting awfully complicated.

**There is too much to know. You can't keep up with it all.
And it's hard for us to see the other guy's perspective:
each of us was trained as a specialist.**

Specializing in one area is tough enough. It's impossible to know enough about all of the different areas and subjects—education, health, housing, food and so forth.

Fragmentation is encouraged everywhere. Only a handful of academics and a few staff look at the whole picture. Everybody is a specialist and there are few incentives or opportunities for interdisciplinary thinking.

**Most people don't understand what these programs actually do.
They think they are a lot more generous than they actually are.**

People think getting Food Stamps is a big deal. But it's only about 50 cents a meal.

How can you expect people to understand how important it is for these programs to work together sensibly when they believe the programs themselves aren't any good?

AFDC isn't much money per month, but people say it's a handout. In Mississippi, the most a family of four can get under AFDC is *less than $1,500 a year.*

These programs carry a stigma and the agency that administers a program can make a big difference. For example, elderly people eligible for help under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance program won't go into a welfare office to apply for aid. But they might go into a school or a community action center.

**There hasn't been much leadership
on programs for children and families.**

None of our leaders have talked about the problems of poor children in a way that captures the attention of the public. No other Western nation has the child poverty rate we do.

*Congressional strategies to make programs for children and families more effective and efficient could range from tinkering around the programmatic edges to a big bang restructuring.*

## WHAT COULD CONGRESS DO TO IMPROVE FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

### Do for children what we did for the elderly.

Guaranteed income and health care for the elderly—Social Security and Medicare—reduced their need for special service programs. Isn't this a model we should use for poor families and children? If we gave them money, wouldn't they be able to make sensible decisions about housing, food and health care, just like the elderly do?

We've basically thrown away two generations of kids. We're now throwing away a third. Economically, our country can't survive if we keep doing that.

In crass terms—if you look at who will be paying into Social Security when we're old—you realize that it is in everyone's self interest to invest in children. We need to build an awareness that all taxpayers, even those without children, will benefit from this.

If we as a country think having healthy children, good students and strong families is important, then we need to put resources—that means money—into preventing them from breaking down in the first place, not just fixing them once they are broken.

### Use the laws that are up for reauthorization—or that Congress will be considering anyway—to reward collaboration and coordination.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, which expires September 30, 1993) is up for reauthorization. We'll try to do something about integrating services there.

Other major programs coming up for reauthorization include Food Stamps, WIC and Head Start. By looking at all of these programs together, we could make a real difference in coordination.

President Clinton's plans for welfare reform and changing the health care system will provide other opportunities, too.

**Be more disciplined in the appropriations process.**

As a start, don't appropriate funds for programs that aren't authorized. Start the authorization process earlier.

And don't expect the Appropriations Committee to make the hard decisions (such as which programs should be abolished) that really belong in the authorizing committees.

**Pass separate bills that promote coordination and collaboration.**

The Link-Up for Learning Act will come up again in the next session of Congress. It's aimed at coordinating education and social services.

Senator Kennedy will reintroduce the Comprehensive Youth Services Act next year, too, as a way to coordinate services for at-risk students and dropouts.

**Make federal funding more flexible.**
**Use federal waivers—or block grants or revenue sharing—**
**to give states and localities more flexibility.**

We should offer governors an incentive grant to consolidate federal funds. And we should couple this with a broad waiver authority (not a waiver program-by-program) to help states patch together federal programs. If a governor shows that a provision gets in the way of a program's goals, then that provision could be waived.

And, if a majority of states asked for a waiver in an area, it is incumbent on those of us at the federal level to look for less cumbersome ways to get the same result—maybe through block grants or revenue sharing.

Coordination is when everyone cooperates within their individual program. Integration is when programs are blended together. When you coordinate, people don't lose anything. When you integrate, everyone loses something, but the final result may well be worth it. We need to allow flexibility for both coordinating and integrating services in states and communities.

We could have more block grants, but require states to devise specific plans on how they would use the funding.

We already have a model for more flexibility at the local level in Title XX, the Social Services Block Grant, where states design their own plans.

But you have to be careful about block grants. They won't work in all areas. For example, a housing block grant program wouldn't solve the problem of too little housing for the poor.

I think we have to place more faith in the states and communities to patch together federal programs. Some local communities are already administering eight to ten programs in one place. We shouldn't make it so hard for them.

**Sunset all programs, including entitlement programs.**
**Or at least get rid of programs that are ineffective or outdated.**
**And eliminate or combine small programs.**

We have too many programs and too many entitlement programs. I can write you a list of ten federal programs that have been dysfunctional for ten years. If a program is important enough to be an entitlement, it's important enough to reconsider every five years.

Part of the reason that Welfare and Food Stamps are public relations failures is that they haven't been reviewed in a comprehensive way.

We can't afford to continue funding programs just because people have become used to getting that money. We have to look at the merits of programs for *today's* world.

A lot of the smaller programs don't account for a lot of money or touch very many people. But each has its own detailed eligibility rules and processes. And each has its own highly vocal advocates that make it impossible to kill the program. Rather than put so much energy into these small programs, we should focus on making the large programs work well.

**Repeal most of the categorical programs.**
**Instead, use that money to provide direct cash assistance or vouchers so that people can pay for services they need.**

Money is a dignified way to help.

Proposals have floated around the Congress to provide a $500 to $5,000 allowance per child.

One of the most dramatic welfare reform proposals came under Richard Nixon—his proposed Family Assistance Plan, where you gave poor people the money they need.

We should be talking about credits or vouchers for training, housing and so forth, not actual cash.

Can we find a better word than "voucher" to describe some kind of market-driven system? "Voucher" has too much baggage.

We need to be more adventuresome. If you took the $150 billion in the major programs affecting children and families (AFDC, Chapter 1, Earned Income Tax Credit, Food Stamps, Section 8 housing programs, JTPA, Medicaid, School Lunch Program, WIC, etc.) and divided it by the 14 percent of people living in poverty, you get $5,000 a head.* That amount would put a lot of people above the poverty line.

The annual cost of foster care in the top ten states is $25,000 to $30,000 per child, and many families have more than one child. If you just gave a family the $50,000 to $60,000, they would have enough resources to purchase a home, obtain health care and solve their own problems.

**Use the Congressional reorganization to prod Congress to deal more coherently with issues affecting children and families.**

The new Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress has the potential to make Congress deal with this fragmentation. But it isn't clear they will be brave enough to touch committee jurisdictions. That's political dynamite.

Too many committees and subcommittees deal with programs affecting children and families. We need to look for creative solutions: *Should these issues be consolidated into a few committees? Should there be a special House-Senate staff on the model of the Joint Committee on Taxation? Should the joint referral process be streamlined or revised? Should joint hearings be encouraged or required?*

We really need budget figures to tell us how money spent on a program for children pays off in the long run, even if the savings are in programs that come out of other committees.

* These and other programs are described in Appendix B.

Require the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Congressional Research Service (CRS) or some similar group to develop a "coordination impact statement" as new bills are considered and laws are reauthorized: *How would this bill affect other programs already on the books? What other programs also serve essentially the same population? Do services duplicate those already available through other programs?*

Committees want control of, and credit for, the programs in their jurisdiction: what would joint control and credit look like?

Vehicles (like the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families) already exist to debate these issues. But they are toothless tigers—they don't control any programs. (This committee and other cross-cutting select committees went out of existence in April 1993.)

The Budget and Appropriations Committees look at the whole picture, too. And Appropriations has a lot of power. But their job is to look at the numbers. The authorizing committees need the big picture, too.

**Be adventuresome—**
**do a big bang restructuring of federal programs affecting children and families.**

We may need a massive big bang restructuring to make these programs make sense. But the lobbyists are too powerful and there is no political will to do that.

*There is no dearth of legislative ideas*
*for promoting collaboration and coordination*
*at the state and local level.*
*The tough part is structuring provisions*
*that will work in states as varied as*
*Florida, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska,*
*Oregon and New Hampshire.*

## WHAT LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS MIGHT PROMOTE COORDINATED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

### Put services where people are— where children go to school, where families live, where people work and in community centers.

Fund schools to be community centers.

Housing projects are often excellent places to provide services. Local housing authorities should move towards providing comprehensive services.

The Community Services Block Grant program is a good example of coordination. That program serves the entire family: it can provide heat, food, prenatal care.... Schools and communities have actually brought people together in the same room to identify problems and solutions. Services can be provided at the school, or wherever makes the most sense.

Another example is foster care. Schools may be the most stable thing in the lives of foster kids. Having to change schools when they change foster parents can be devastating. Why can't the resources follow the child, so he or she can stay in the same school? All you would need is a little transportation money.

### Reward rather than penalize states, communities and providers that operate efficiently and effectively.

All of the incentives now reward spending every penny of the money you get. Anything you don't spend gets returned to the government. Why not have a system where the state (or school or community or health care provider or whoever) can keep a certain percentage of the money they save as long as they use it for the

overall purposes of that program? These savings could then help fund state and local coordination efforts.

**Use federal money as a lubricant for flexibility.**

Provide some federal money for the administrative part of coordination—making connections with other agencies, coordinating procedures and so forth.

Provide states, communities and schools with carrots for making coordinated programs work. Carrots don't even have to cost a lot of money. For example, the Blue Ribbon School Program cost little (all the schools got was a plaque), but schools worked hard all year to be named.

**Revamp definitions, eligibility requirements and procedures across programs and committees.**

Different laws define the same terms differently, depending on which committee or subcommittee they come out of. For example, a "full-time student" means one thing for higher education, another for AFDC and a third thing for Food Stamps.

And the value of a car (which can affect eligibility) is determined differently for Food Stamps, AFDC and Medicaid—equity value, market value, etc. No one made the phone calls to work these glitches out while they were working on the bills because they expected a turf battle. I suspect that, when we finally do sit down to deal with these problems, it will be easier to solve than we feared.

Provide for "direct certification," so that a child who qualifies for one program automatically becomes eligible for others, rather than making people apply for each program separately. There are privacy problems, but when it works, it is great. The school just sends a note home saying "your child is eligible."

**Reward outcomes, not processes.**

Maybe we should agree not to have certain specifics in federal legislation. For example, we clutter up bills by specifying advisory councils or micro-managing processes. We should focus on results instead.

Creating more interagency councils isn't the answer. Interagency committees are a farce. I've been on so many of them and they don't make much difference.

**Promote interdisciplinary training.**

Most people were trained in one narrow discipline. But that doesn't prepare us or anyone else to take the broad perspective we need.

need to push colleges and universities to get out of their linary boxes and promote cross-discipline staff development for people already on the job (in-service training).

**Fund staff to build bridges across agencies.**

We can't expect case workers to change institutions: they are too busy putting out fires for individual families.

We can promote coordination and collaboration by funding someone to do the job of making linkages across agencies.

**Run pilot programs without regulations as a test.**

Quite frankly, we know the problems, but we don't know how to solve them from a federal policy perspective. Perhaps we should run ten pilot programs pooling all of the categorical money that would otherwise go into those areas. We are spending so much money so badly now; perhaps these pilot programs could help us figure out how to get from A to B.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts are funding state and local experiments around coordinating and integrating services. Maybe we can learn something from them.

***Some changes don't require legislation. The Clinton Administration could do some things right away.***

## WHAT CAN THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION DO TO MAKE FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MORE COHERENT?

### Have federal departments and agencies work together to develop policies and legislation.

Have a panel of Secretaries, not just the Secretary of the department most affected, testify on major legislation—job training, health, education, food... That would force them to get out of their agency boxes.

The Administration and the Congress should know up-front how changing one program affects other programs. For example: *How could changes in Chapter 1 affect the EPSDT part of Medicaid and the National School Lunch Program? What will be the ripple effects of proposed health care reforms on other federal programs, especially those aimed at low-income people?*

Now we only find this out *after* a bill is enacted because all of these programs come out of different Congressional committees and are run by different departments.

### Revamp the audit process.

Revise the auditing process so that it is in tune with larger program goals. Auditors shouldn't just be traffic cops. They shouldn't just check to be sure that the "i's" are dotted and the "t's" are crossed. Auditors should look more broadly at what programs are trying to accomplish. It's silly to focus only on *efficiency* when the important issue is *effectiveness*.

When they changed the auditing process for the National School Lunch Program, participation dropped because schools became afraid of being caught for giving a free lunch to a student who didn't qualify.

The Inspector General's office must understand the goals of programs so that auditors look at accountability in terms of outcomes: it is counter-productive bean counting if auditors just look for procedural glitches. And auditors should look for under-enrollment as well as over-enrollment.

Some of the best community programs—those that creatively blend funding streams—would flunk an audit. But they take the risk of getting caught because that's what makes their programs work. It shouldn't be this way: audits should encourage, not discourage, effective use of federal funds.

**Have the departments follow through on coordination initiatives already started.**

For example, the last Congress passed legislation requiring the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to compare the overlapping eligibility rules of AFDC, Food Stamps and Medicaid. But the parent bill was vetoed. The new Administration could compel this analysis at its own initiative, making further legislation unnecessary. We shouldn't need to pass a bill to get something this basic.

**Strengthen the research and planning staffs in OMB and the departments.**

The quality of research and information available to us from the Executive Branch has deteriorated sharply. Programs have been cut. Staff have been cut. Evaluations have been cut.

In the old days, ASPE (the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the Department of Health and Human Services) had a strong staff: they did some real planning and tried to answer the tough questions. But that went out the door in 1981. You can't rebuild that capacity in a hundred days.

We used to be able to rely on OMB as a think tank that provided good information, but now the numbers determine policy there.

**Most importantly, the new Administration has to take the lead on coordination across committees and departments.**

It's the vision thing.

We don't need twenty more years of study. What we need is leadership, a strong commitment and a bold approach.

So much of what we do is short-sighted. Why, for example, can't we fully fund immunizations for children, which have a ten to one cost-benefit ratio?

Leadership and direction has to come from a strong President and his Secretaries.

We need a clear set of priorities that can bring the Administration and the Congress together—to work together across programs, committees and agencies towards common goals.

## CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

Reflecting on the discussion at the December 1992 Policy Exchange seminars, we can draw several conclusions.

Making programs for children and families work better is not a partisan issue. Democrats and Republicans are equally troubled by the fragmentation of our current system of health, social service and educational programs—and they are equally enthusiastic about finding solutions. Interest is also strong across a wide range of Congressional committees.

Still, there is no quick and easy fix to make federal programs for children and families fit together coherently. It took years to develop the current programs and they will not change overnight.

Congressional staff are more isolated than they would like to be. Most have few opportunities to get to know (much less develop good working relationships with) their colleagues on other committees, even though their programs affect essentially the same children and families. All but two participants reported that they met new people or made useful connections at the seminars.

As tough and laden with landmines as the issue is, now is the time to tackle it. When people talk about "government not working," they are often thinking about well-intentioned but overly complex social programs that bounce a family in distress from agency to agency.

**Most importantly, the Clinton Administration has a unique opportunity to make sense of the crazy-quilt of federal programs affecting children and families. While the Congressional committee structure institutionalizes turf concerns to such an extent that Congress is not equipped to take the lead, our work has shown that Capitol Hill would be receptive to, and even welcome, strong leadership from the new Administration.**

Finally, seminar participants expressed a strong desire for continued and expanded Policy Exchange activities—to continue this dialogue across Congressional committees and to expand it to include key Executive Branch staff. Future Policy Exchange activities will reflect these priorities.

# *APPENDIX A*
# PARTICIPANTS IN THE DECEMBER 1992 POLICY EXCHANGE SEMINARS

## Participants, House of Representatives Senior Staff Seminar

**Beatrice Birman**
Assistant Director of Cross-Cutting Issues
Human Resources Division
General Accounting Office

**Vee Burke**
Specialist in Income Maintenance
Education and Public Welfare Division
Congressional Research Service

**Dennis Fargas**
Budget Analyst
Committee on Education and Labor

**June Harris**
Legislative Associate
Committee on Education and Labor

**Julia Isaacs**
Principal Analyst
Human Resources Cost Estimate Unit
Congressional Budget Office

**Eric Jensen**
Staff Director
Subcommittee on Human Resources
Committee on Education and Labor

**Margaret Kajeckas**
Legislative Associate
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
Committee on Education and Labor

**Ken Leventhal**
Senior Analyst
Committee on the Budget

**Karabelle Pizzigati**
Staff Director
Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families

**Lynn Selmser**
Professional Staff Member
Committee on Education and Labor

**Karen Spar**
Specialist in Social Legislation
Education and Public Welfare Division
Congressional Research Service

**Mike Stephens**
Staff Assistant
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations

**John Valencia**
Professional Staff Member
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development
Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs

## Participants, Senate Senior Staff Seminar

**Kimberly Barnes-O'Connor**
Legislative Assistant
Office of Senator Nancy Kassebaum

**John Deeken**
Professional Staff Member
Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress

**David Evans**
Staff Director
Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities
Committee on Labor and Human Resources

**J. Michael Hall**
Clerk
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations

**Susan K. Hattan**
Minority Staff Director
Committee on Labor and Human Resources

**Jean Jones**
Specialist in Social Legislation
Education and Public Welfare Division
Congressional Research Service

**Kathy Leonard**
Staff Economist
Committee on Finance

**Margaret Malone**
Professional Staff Member
Committee on Finance

**Mark Mazur**
Staff Economist
Joint Committee on Taxation

**Linda Morra**
Director
Education and Employment Issues
General Accounting Office

**Doug O'Brien**
Professional Staff Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

**Janice Peskin**
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Human Resources and Community Development
Congressional Budget Office

**Barbara Pryor**
Legislative Assistant
Office of Senator John D. Rockefeller

**Lisa Ross**
Professional Staff Member
Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities
Committee on Labor and Human Resources

## Discussion Facilitators

**Cynthia G. Brown**
Director
Resource Center on Educational Equity
Council of Chief State School Officers

**Christopher Cross**
Executive Director, Education Initiative
The Business Roundtable

**Margaret Dunkle**
Director
The IEL Policy Exchange

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**Mike Usdan**
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**Margaret Dunkle**
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The IEL Policy Exchange

**Carl Dolan**
Program Associate
The IEL Policy Exchange

**Jane Dewey**
Executive Assistant
The IEL Policy Exchange

*The ten programs outlined below range from AFDC to WIC. They are among the largest federal programs, accounting for more than 150 billion federal dollars annually.*

# *APPENDIX B*
# TEN MAJOR FEDERAL PROGRAMS AFFECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## AFDC -- Aid to Families with Dependent Children

The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program provides cash payments to needy children (and their caretakers) who lack support because at least one parent is dead, disabled, continually absent from home, or unemployed. Within federal requirements, each state individually defines "need," sets benefit (payment) levels, establishes income and resource limits, and has responsibility for administering the program. The cash payment a family receives depends on the family's cash income and size, as well as the state in which the family lives.

AFDC eligibility almost always makes a family automatically eligible for Food Stamps and Medicaid coverage. AFDC eligibility also automatically entitles a child to receive free meals through the School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

In 1992, there were an estimated 12.6 million AFDC recipients, including 8.6 million children. That comes to approximately one out of every eight children in the United States.

The 1993 federal appropriation for AFDC is $14.9 billion. Estimated state AFDC costs for 1993 are $11.5 billion.

## Chapter 1

The Chapter 1 program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides federal funds to help school districts improve instructional programs and educational outcomes for educationally disadvantaged children. The program focuses on low-income children, and the funding formula provides increased resources to schools located in areas with high concentrations of child poverty.

Authorization for Chapter 1 expires at the end of fiscal 1993.

In 1992, more than five million children participated in Chapter 1 programs. This comes to approximately one out of every nine school-age children in the United States.

The 1993 appropriation for Chapter 1 is $6.7 billion.

## Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) uses the income tax system to provide cash to low-income working parents who have a child or disabled adult child living with them. The EITC is unique among tax credits in that it is "refundable" -- that is, the Internal Revenue Service makes a direct payment of this "credit" to people who either owe no income tax or owe less tax than the "credit" for which they qualify.

The EITC increases as family income declines. In 1992, the EITC reached its maximum for a family with an earned annual income of $7,520, began to phase out at an income of $11,840, and phased out entirely at an income of $22,370. The maximum annual credit in 1992 ranged from $1,325 to $1,385 depending on the number of children. Taxpayers providing health insurance coverage for their dependents could receive an additional credit of up to $450, and those with babies less than a year old could receive an additional credit of up to $375.

An estimated 13.8 million families received EITCs in 1992.

The 1993 estimated cost of the Earned Income Tax Credit is $11.8 billion.

## Food Stamps

The Food Stamp program provides a monthly supplement, in the form of coupons ("food stamps"), to help low-income individuals and families buy food. Eligibility is based on federal poverty guidelines and depends on a household's size, monthly cash income and liquid assets. Households receiving AFDC or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are almost always automatically eligible for Food Stamps.

Authorization for the Food Stamp Act expires at the end of fiscal 1995.

In 1991, 22.6 million people (about one in every eleven people in the U.S.) participated in the Food Stamp program.

The 1993 appropriation for the Food Stamp program is $28.1 billion.

## Head Start

The Head Start program provides a range of educational, social, health and nutritional services through local agencies and organizations to low-income preschool children to help them enter school on equal footing with their higher-income peers. To be eligible, children must live in families with incomes at or below the federal poverty level, although up to ten percent of children in any Head Start program may be from higher-income families.

Authorization for Head Start expires at the end of fiscal 1994.

In 1991, approximately 583,500 children -- about 28 percent of three-to-five year olds who were poor enough to qualify for the program -- participated in Head Start.

The 1993 appropriation for Head Start is $2.8 billion.

## Job Training Partnership Act

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) has several major components: Block Grants to States serve economically disadvantaged youths and adults, Title II-B allocates funds to states and localities to administer the Summer Employment and Training Program for disadvantaged young people, and the Job Corps serves economically disadvantaged young people.

In 1992, there were an estimated 602,300 new enrollees in State Block Grant Programs, 565,000 participants in the Summer Youth Employment Program, and 68,600 new enrollees in the Job Corps.

The 1993 appropriation for JTPA is $4.2 billion.

## Medicaid

Medicaid is a federal-state matching entitlement program that provides medical assistance for low-income persons who are aged, blind, disabled, members of families with dependent children and low-income pregnant women and children (even if they do not receive AFDC). Medicaid eligibility is generally linked to eligibility for AFDC and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. Low-income pregnant women and children not receiving AFDC as well as low-income elderly persons who receive Medicare may also be eligible for Medicaid.

Because each state designs and administers its own program (within broad federal guidelines), there is substantial variation among states in terms of who is eligible for services; the type, amount, duration and scope of benefits and services; and who can provide services as well as how much providers are paid.

States must serve certain "categorically needy" groups in order to receive federal matching funds. They must also provide "EPSDT Services" to Medicaid-eligible children under age 21. Unlike services provided under other parts of Medicaid, *states must cover the cost of all medically necessary health care for illnesses or conditions identified through an EPSDT medical, dental, vision or hearing screen.*

In 1990, 24.2 million people received Medicaid benefits. This came to 10 percent of the total U.S. population -- and 18 percent of all children under age nineteen.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the Medicaid program will cost a total of $140 billion in 1993 -- $80 billion, 57 percent, from federal funds and $60 billion, 43 percent, from state funds. In 1990, AFDC children and adults accounted for 68 percent of Medicaid recipients, but 27 percent of Medicaid costs.

### National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program provides both cash and commodity assistance to schools serving nonprofit lunches to students. Children from families with incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty level may receive free lunches and those from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level may receive reduced-price lunches.

Approximately 24.2 million students receive lunches through this program each school day. About half of the meals (and nearly 90 percent of the federal funding) are for low-income children.

The 1993 appropriation for the National School Lunch Program is $4.1 billion.

### "Section 8 Program" -- Leased Housing Assistance

Section 8 Housing Assistance is designed to help low-income households rent privately owned, modestly priced housing through tenant-based and project-based programs. Typically, this assistance reduces rental payments to no more than 30 percent of net income, although some participants in the voucher program pay a higher percentage. To receive Section 8 housing assistance, a family must have a low income (not more than 50 to 80 percent of the area median income).

In 1992, 4.7 million households received rental subsidies under the Section 8 program.

1993 budget authority for Section 8 is approximately $9.2 billion.

### WIC -- Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants & Children

The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides food assistance and nutritional screening to pregnant and postpartum women, their infants and children up to age five who have low incomes (at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level, depending on the state) and are "nutritionally at risk."

Authorization for the WIC program expires at the end of fiscal 1994.

About 4.5 million people -- 1 million women, 1.4 million infants and 2.1 million children -- participated in the program in 1990. In 1991, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that WIC served 56 percent of the 8.5 million people eligible to participate in the program.

The 1993 appropriation for the WIC program is $2.9 billion.

*Sometimes statistics are boring,*
*incomprehensible and tedious.*
*Sometimes they provide important insights*
*to guide policy development....*

## *APPENDIX C*
## A FEW FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### Just how many children are there in the U.S.?

There were 63.6 million U.S. children under age 18 in 1990, a slight decrease from 63.8 million in 1980. At the same time, the number of children *under age 6* increased 13 percent, rivalling the baby boomer numbers of the 1960s.

Just over a quarter (26 percent) of all people in this country were under age 18 in 1990, down from 28 percent in 1980. This percentage will continue to drop as baby boomers age and life expectancies increase.

### How well off are children in this country?

Many of our children are poor. Child poverty rates in the United States increased from 16 percent in 1978 to 21 percent in 1990. In all, one out of every five children was poor in 1990. Close to half (45 percent) of female-headed families with children were poor in 1990.

### How have families changed?

Only 26 percent of our nation's children lived in "traditional" two-parent families in 1990—that is, families where one parent was in the work force and one was not. To look at the figures from another perspective, *only three percent of all U.S. households fit this Ozzie and Harriet model.* This large difference is in part because many households have no children. (A *household* consists of one or more people occupying the same housing unit. A *family* consists of one or more people related by blood, marriage or adoption.)

Nineteen percent of children lived in families headed by one parent in 1990, *compared to four percent in 1960.* Between 1980 and 1990, the number of single-mother families increased by 19 percent, from 4.9 million to 5.9 million.

**How many mothers have paid jobs?**

More than two-thirds (68 percent) of children under age 18 had working mothers in 1990, compared to 55 percent ten years earlier.

The figures are almost as high for women with children under age six: 60 percent were in the paid work force in 1990, compared to 46 percent a decade earlier.

**How does federal spending for children compare to spending for the elderly?**

The federal government spent an average of $11,350 per aged person, and $1,020 per child, in 1990. These figures are projected to increase to $12,940 per elderly person and $1,650 per child by 1995.

***Sources:***


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*Center for Demographic Policy Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Institute for Educational Leadership, September 1992.

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THE IEL POLICY EXCHANGE

THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, INC.

# *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

## SOLVING THE MAZE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

### *PERSPECTIVES FROM KEY CONGRESSIONAL STAFF*

Most federal and state programs for children and families are organized to fit within the jurisdictions of specific Congressional committees and Executive Branch departments, not the more complex realities that face today's children and families. To explore this maze of federal programs, the Institute for Educational Leadership's Policy Exchange held two round-table seminars in December 1992. Seminar participants were an eclectic and bipartisan cross-section of key Congressional staff responsible for a wide range of programs, from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Chapter 1 and Food Stamps.

During these discussions, participants candidly and constructively shared their perspectives. ***While this executive summary and the full report on the seminars are written in a conversational tone and often use the first person ("I," "We") to convey the energy and openness of the discussion, the specific items are not quotations: they are composites and summaries of the varied points of view expressed.***

### What Are the Symptoms of Fragmented Federal Programs for Children and Families?

There are too many different programs run by too many different agencies.

Programs don't fit together to meet the needs of real people.

Federal programs treat states like children. The federal government micro-manages and doesn't allow for flexibility.

The federal bureaucracy is in gridlock.

Programs reward the wrong behaviors—of both recipients and administrators.

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We don't speak the same language, even though our programs serve the same people.

You have to be a great manager to be poor.

## Why Are Coordinated Services for Children and Families So Rare?

We see the trees, not the forest. There isn't a clear federal vision that unifies all of these programs, even though they serve largely the same people.

People at the federal level don't understand the problems and issues facing states, communities and families.

Turf—state and local programs compete for funds and visibility.

Turf—the Congressional committee structure makes fashioning comprehensive programs difficult.

Turf—Special interest groups fight to preserve "their" programs.

Members of Congress get credit for specific bills—not for looking at the big picture.

The more we target the most needy, the more complicated programs become.

Fragmentation can sneak up on you. Once a program is labeled "successful," Congress asks it to do more and more—gradually loading it down until it isn't so successful.

There is too much to know. You can't keep up with it all. And it's hard for us to see the other guy's perspective: each of us was trained as a specialist.

Most people don't understand what these programs actually do. They think they are a lot more generous than they actually are.

There hasn't been much leadership on programs for children and families.

## What Could Congress Do to Improve Federal Programs for Children and Families?

Do for children what we did for the elderly.

Use the laws that are up for reauthorization—or that Congress will be considering anyway—to reward collaboration and coordination.

Be more disciplined in the appropriations process.

Pass separate bills that promote coordination and collaboration.

Make federal funding more flexible. Use federal waivers—or block grants or revenue sharing—to give states and localities more flexibility.

Sunset all programs, including entitlement programs. Or at least get rid of programs that are ineffective or outdated. And eliminate or combine small programs.

Repeal most of the categorical programs. Instead, use that money to provide direct cash assistance or vouchers so that people can pay for services they need.

Use the Congressional reorganization to prod Congress to deal more coherently with issues affecting children and families.

Be adventuresome—do a big bang restructuring of federal programs affecting children and families.

## What Legislative Provisions Might Promote Coordinated Services for Children and Families?

Put services where people are—where children go to school, where families live, where people work and in community centers.

Reward rather than penalize states, communities and providers that operate efficiently and effectively.

Use federal money as a lubricant for flexibility.

Revamp definitions, eligibility requirements and procedures across programs and committees.

Reward outcomes, not processes.

Promote interdisciplinary training.

Fund staff to build bridges across agencies.

Run pilot programs without regulations as a test.

## What Can the Clinton Administration Do to Make Federal Programs for Children and Families More Coherent?

Have federal departments and agencies work together to develop policies and legislation.

Revamp the audit process.

Have the departments follow through on coordination initiatives already started.

Strengthen the research and planning staffs in OMB and the departments.

Most importantly, the new Administration has to take the lead on coordination across committees and departments.

* * * * * * * *

While the seminars produced a flood of sometimes contradictory and always challenging ideas, they also produced some areas of consensus:

> It doesn't take a medical degree or a law degree to diagnose the critical condition of federal programs for children and families. The symptoms are numerous and painful.
>
> The barriers to coordinated services for children and families are substantial. A key problem is turf.
>
> Congressional strategies to make programs for children and families more effective and efficient could range from tinkering around the programmatic edges to a big bang restructuring.
>
> There is no dearth of legislative ideas for promoting collaboration and coordination at the state and local level. The tough part is structuring provisions that will work in states as varied as Florida, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oregon and New Hampshire.
>
> Some changes don't require legislation. The Clinton Administration could do some things right away.

Making programs for children and families work better is neither a partisan issue nor a concern of only a couple of Congressional committees. And, while there is no quick fix, now is the time to tackle the issue. When people talk about "government not working," they are often thinking about the well-intentioned but overly complex social programs that bounce a family in distress from agency to agency. The Clinton Administration has a unique opportunity to exert much-needed leadership to impose some sense on the crazy-quilt of federal programs affecting children and families.

Copies of the full report on the December 1992 Policy Exchange seminars
*(Solving the Maze of Federal Programs for Children & Families: Perspectives from Key Congressional Staff)*
are available for $10 pre-paid from the Institute for Educational Leadership, Suite 310,
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 822-8405. Volume discounts are available.

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**The Intergovernmental/Interagency**

# Policy Exchange

The Institute for Educational Leadership is a nonpartisan organization that promotes collaborative leadership and effective policy across all sectors and at all levels of government. The IEL Policy Exchange focuses on policy initiatives that foster collaboration and coordination on issues affecting children, families and communities. Activities of the Policy Exchange include:

National seminars and site visits for key federal policy makers,

Publications that bridge agency and disciplinary boundaries, and

State-level activities for policy makers.

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# *EXCERPTS FROM*

## SOLVING THE MAZE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

*PERSPECTIVES FROM KEY CONGRESSIONAL STAFF*

*We treat states like I treat my four and a half year old.*

*The whole federal reward system, from intake to audits,*
*is set up to keep people out --*
*then we wonder why people who really need the services don't get in.*

*Our needs-tested programs...phase out as people earn more money.*
*That makes sense, but it can be like falling off a cliff.*

*JTPA...Carl Perkins Act...OBRA...excess morbidity...Thrifty Food Plan...*
*Chapter 1...Title XX...IDEA...Part H...Tech Prep...Title IV-E...*

*We need to listen to the bottom of the food chain.*

*No one in the federal government has had a new good idea*
*on child welfare in the last ten years.*

*Services like child welfare are organized differently in each state,*
*so it's hard to have a one-size-fits-all federal recipe for coordination.*

*The lobbyists are too powerful*
*for us to restructure federal programs the way we should.*



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*Often the most powerful and vocal constituency*
*is the groups and institutions affected:*
*schools, agricultural producers, groups of employees, and so forth.*

*There aren't cookie-cutter solutions*
*for coordinating programs for children and families.*

*Hmmmm...*
*Maybe there should be a rule that programs can't be named after a member*
*until he or she is dead -- or at least out of Congress.*

*No other Western nation has the child poverty rate we do.*

*We should offer governors an incentive grant to consolidate federal funds.*
*And we should couple this with a broad waiver authority.*

*If a program is important enough to be an entitlement,*
*it's important enough to reconsider every five years.*

*Money is a dignified way to help.*

*Can we find a better word than "voucher"*
*to describe some kind of market-driven system?*
*"Voucher" has too much baggage.*

*Schools may be the most stable thing in the lives of foster kids.*

*It is counter-productive bean-counting*
*if auditors just look for procedural glitches.*

*It's the vision thing.*

*We don't need twenty more years of study.*
*What we need is leadership, a strong commitment and a bold approach.*

*Leadership and direction has to come*
*from a strong President and his Secretaries.*

Copies of the full report on the December 1992 Policy Exchange seminars (*Solving the Maze of Federal Programs for Children & Families: Perspectives from Key Congressional Staff*) are available for $10.00 pre-paid from the Institute for Educational Leadership, Suite 310, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 822-8405. Volume discounts are available.



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THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, INC.

May 18, 1993

Dear Colleague:

Collaboration is more than the latest buzzword. It can be a key to *Solving the Maze of Federal Programs for Children and Families*. That premise led us to hold seminars for key Congressional staff and publish a report synthesizing their thought-provoking discussions. You may be surprised at what they had to say.

Inside-the-Beltway met outside-the-Beltway in these discussions. Federal interest in coordinating services for children and families has been slow to surface. But communities and states already understand the problems all too well. Just ask any case worker (in social services, health, education, juvenile justice or another agency), any health or social services director, or any principal of a Chapter 1 school about the contortions they go through to make categorical federal programs fit the more holistic needs of children and families.

Even though many federal programs (from Food Stamps, to AFDC, Chapter 1 and the Earned Income Tax Credit) affect essentially the same children and families, staff rarely sit down and talk to each other across committees. These IEL Policy Exchange seminars provided this rare opportunity.

In *Solving the Maze*, a diverse and bipartisan cross-section of Congressional staff, representing committees ranging from Appropriations to Finance, and Education and Labor to Agriculture, offer their candid observations about:

* the symptoms of fragmented programs,

* why coordinated services are so rare,

* what the Congress can do,

* legislative provisions that would promote collaboration, and

* what the Clinton Administration can do.

Possible solutions raised range from tinkering around the programmatic edges to, in the words of one participant, suggestions that "make Ross Perot look like a moderate."



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No one has yet found a magic bullet that will make sense of the current crazy-quilt of federal programs for children and families. But *Solving the Maze* and other activities of the IEL Policy Exchange are designed to move the discussion along.

Additional copies of the full report are available for $10 pre-paid from IEL. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Margaret C. Dunkle

Margaret C. Dunkle
Director
The IEL Policy Exchange

Enclosures:

Excerpts

*Solving the Maze of Federal Programs for Children & Families: Perspectives from Key Congressional Staff*

Executive Summary

Information About the IEL Policy Exchange

*The Institute for Educational Leadership is a nonpartisan organization that promotes collaborative leadership and effective policy across all sectors and at all levels of government. The IEL Policy exchange focuses on policy initiatives that foster collaboration and coordination on issues affecting children, families, and communities.*